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AN EVALUATION OF THE FARM LABOR SUPERVISOR TRAINING PROGRAM IN CALIFORNIA.

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A REDUCTION OF THE FOREIGN FARM WORK FORCE IN CALIFORNIA AND SUBSEQUENT INCREASE OF THE DOMESTIC WORK FORCE CREATED A NEED FOR TRAINING FARM FOREMEN. DEVELOPMENT OF A COURSE GUIDE AND A WORKSHOP FOR TEACHERS PRECEDED THE 24 COURSES CONDUCTED TO TRAIN 420 FOREMEN WHO SUPERVISED 20,000 WORKERS. THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY WERE TO DETERMINE IF SUPERVISORY SKILL AND PRODUCTIVITY WERE INCREASED, WORKER TURNOVER WAS DECREASED, ACCIDENTS WERE REDUCED, EMPLOYERS APPROVED CONTINUATION OF COURSES, AND IMPROVEMENTS WERE NEEDED. PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITH 25 RANDOMLY SELECTED FOREMEN WHO HAD ATTENDED SUPERVISORY COURSES IN 5 RANDOMLY SELECTED SCHOOLS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS. IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT FOREMEN HAD INCREASED THEIR SUPERVISORY SKILL AS A RESULT OF THE COURSE, WORKER TURNOVER DECREASED, PRODUCTIVITY INCREASED, SAFETY MAY HAVE IMPROVED, AND THAT THE COURSES SHOULD BE CONTINUED. THE REPORT OUTLINES SEVERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE SUPERVISORS, TEACHER EDUCATORS, AND LOCAL TEACHERS TO FOLLOW IN IMPROVING THE PROGRAM. THE APPENDIX INCLUDES INTERVIEW SCHEDULES FOR FOREMEN AND EMPLOYERS. (JM)

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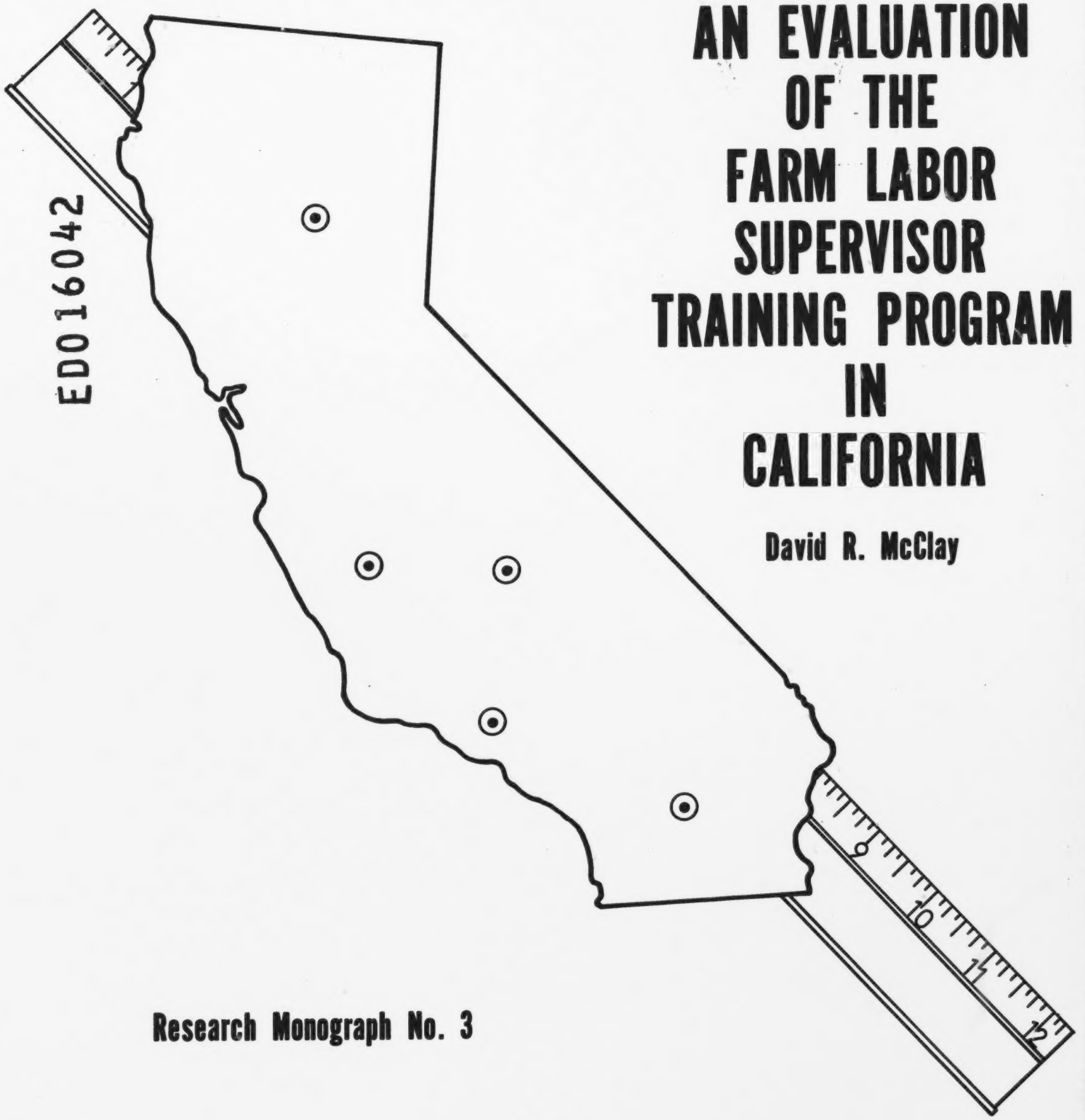

AN EVALUATION OF THE FARM LABOR SUPERVISOR TRAINING PROGRAM IN CALIFORNIA

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and
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AN EVALUATION OF THE FARM LABOR SUPERVISOR TRAINING PROGRAM IN CALIFORNIA

A study to determine possible contributions of the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program in solving some of the farm labor problems in California.

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Spring Semester, 1966

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An Evaluation of the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program in California

David R. McClay

For many years California has led all states in agricultural production, and in 1965 had a gross farm income of almost four billion dollars, or approximately nine percent of the nation's total. The value of the state's agricultural products has doubled since the end of World War II. This growth in California's agricultural production has resulted from increasing mechanization and from applying the results of research in crop production, management, processing, and distribution in meeting the nation's growing needs for food and fiber. This is particularly interesting because it has occurred in spite of a declining farm population and a reduction in the number of farm workers.

For years, until 1965, the domestic work force in California agriculture was reinforced by farm workers from other countries, with a majority coming from Mexico. Factors contributing to the employment of these foreign workers were the difficulty of recruiting domestic workers for short-term jobs which, in general, were not highly paid, and the availability of alternative work at higher pay in the growing non-farm economy. A lack of adequate housing in some areas also contributed to the problem of recruiting the domestic workers needed at peak labor periods on the farms and ranches.

The Manpower Report of the President to Congress in March, 1966, prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor, states, "In recent years employment of foreign workers on this country's farms has come under increasing criticism. It was stated that their employment restricted the job opportunities of domestic farm hands and eliminated normal competitive pressures to improve wages and working conditions in agriculture. It was pointed out also that large numbers of jobless workers might be available for farm work if wages were increased and if farm employers had more incentive to intensify recruitment efforts.

"For these reasons, Public Law 78 (the 82nd Congress) was permitted to expire at the end of 1964. For 13 years this law had authorized the admission to the country of Mexican workers for temporary farm jobs, on contracts and under the supervision of the Government."

The Report further states that "As a result of the termination of Public Law 78 and the administrative actions of the Department of Labor, there was a

dramatic curtailment in the use of foreign contract workers on U.S. farms. During 1965, less than 36,000 were admitted to the United States for temporary farm jobs--as compared with 200,000 the preceding year."

The controversy prior to and following the expiration of Public Law 78 (the 82nd Congress) is well known. California growers were faced with replacing experienced braceros with a relatively inexperienced domestic work force. In anticipation of the problems this would create, the California Growers Farm Labor Committee requested the Farm Placement Division, State Department of Employment, to arrange courses of instruction for farm and ranch foremen. The purpose of the courses would be to improve the ability of these men in managing and instructing the available supply of generally inexperienced workers in agricultural occupations. This request was transmitted to the State Bureau of Agriculture Education, which arranged to initiate a program of instruction on a pilot basis through departments of vocational agriculture in high schools and junior colleges. Subsequently, federal vocational education funds were obtained to carry on the experimental program. The Bureau of Agricultural Education contracted with the Department of Agricultural Education, University of California, Davis, to coordinate, develop, and evaluate this program.

A twenty-hour course of instruction (ten two-hour sessions) was prepared by the Department of Agricultural Education, including a detailed printed course guide for instructors. The course was designed to train farm foremen, superintendents, and crew leaders to (1) understand and use principles of good supervision, (2) maintain effective relationships with workers, (3) handle personnel and relationship problems as they occur, (4) instruct new and inexperienced workers in how to perform farm jobs, and (5) analyze and break down jobs to determinetime and labor-saving shortcuts. In brief, the major course objectives were reducing worker turnover and increasing worker productivity. Early encouragement and financial assistance in developing the program were given by many of the grower-labor associations of California.

Following a one-week workshop for 20 teachers who were interested in teaching the 20-hour course, 24 courses were conducted in 19 communities in the state during the first year, July, 1964, to July, 1965. Approximately 420 foremen, supervisors, and owner-operators, who supervised 20,000 farm workers during peak seasons, completed these courses. The program has been continued in 1965-1966.

Objectives of the Evaluation

During February, March, and April, 1966, following the first year of operation, an evaluation was made of the Farm Labor Supervisors Training Program. The purpose of the study was to secure answers to the following questions:

1. Was skill in supervising workers increased as a result of the course?
2. Was worker turnover reduced as a result of the course?
3. Was worker productivity increased as a result of the course?
4. Were worker accidents reduced as a result of the course?
5. Do employers and supervisors of foremen who completed the course recommend a continuation of the program?
6. What recommendations for improving future courses could be made as a result of the interviews?

How the Evaluation Was Made

It was anticipated that objective evidence to answer the evaluation's six questions would be difficult if not impossible to obtain. However, it was decided that personal interviews of a random sample of employers and their foremen who had completed the course in several sections of the state would satisfy the objectives of the study.

Five of the nineteen schools which offered the courses in 1964-65 were randomly selected for study. Schools selected were Yuba College, Marysville; College of the Sequoias, Visalia; Coalinga College, Coalinga; Santa Paula High School, Santa Paula; College of the Desert, Coachella.

Five foremen who completed the course in each of the above schools were randomly selected and personally interviewed, as were their employers, making a total of 50 interviews in all. The interviews were made by the author on the farms, ranches, groves, orchards, and gardens of the employers in the five selected areas of California. (Copies of the interview schedules appear in the appendix.)

In summarizing the responses of those interviewed, question No. 2 of the interview schedule was combined with question No. 3; question No. 4 was combined with No. 5; and No. 6 with No. 7. This was done so that the responses would reflect only the effect the courses had had on the information requested. This procedure also condensed the results of the interviews for reporting purposes without losing information of value to the study.

Report of the Evaluation

The responses of the 25 foremen who had completed a Farm Worker Supervisor Training Course between July, 1964, and July, 1965, are shown in Table 1. Inspection of the table shows that the men were unanimous in believing they were better foremen as a result of the courses and all recommended a continuation of the program. They believed that the courses had helped them in becoming more competent in handling workers under their supervision. This, in their opinion, was reflected in some reduction of worker turnover. Worker productivity was increased, they believed, especially that of new workers, who more rapidly achieved the level of competence of experienced help as a result of teaching techniques the foremen learned in the courses.

A minority of the foremen believed that the workers under their supervision had fewer accidents during the year as a result of their increased skill in promoting safe work habits learned through the courses.

The employers interviewed, with few exceptions, believed their foremen were more competent worker supervisors as a result of having completed the courses. The responses of the 25 employers included in the evaluation are also found in Table 1. This group was almost unanimous in recommending a continuation of the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program for new foremen and as a refresher course for experienced foremen.

The employers felt the course had little, if any, effect on worker turnover. They were about equally divided in their opinions as to whether or not worker output or productivity had increased as a result of their foremen having completed a course in Farm Labor Supervision. With few exceptions, they felt the course could not claim a reduction in worker accidents.

The responses of all the foremen and the employers interviewed are summarized at the bottom of Table 1. Both foremen and employers in all five communities were, with few exceptions, in agreement that (1) foremen were more competent to perform their jobs as a result of the training obtained in the courses, and (2) that similar courses should be made available in the future. Both foremen and employers had different opinions as to the effect the courses had on (1) reducing worker turnover during the year, (2) increasing worker productivity, and (3) reducing worker accidents. The five centers in which courses had been held also differed on the responses of foremen and employers to these questions. In general, the foremen felt the courses were of greater value in helping them solve many of the problems of handling farm workers than did their employers.

Table 1

Comparison of Responses of Employers and Foremen Interviewed Concerning the Value of the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Course in California

Location of Course	Respondent	Response to Questions														
		1 (Better foreman)			2-3 (Reduction of worker turn-over			4-5 (Increase in worker productivity)			6-7 (Reduction of worker accidents)			8 (Recommend future courses)		
		Yes	Don't know	No	Yes	Don't know	No	Yes	Don't know	No	Yes	Don't know	No	Yes	Don't know	No
Yuba College	Foreman	5	0	0	1	3	1	2	2	2	3	1	1	5	0	0
	Employer	4	1	0	0	1	4	2	1	2	0	1	4	5	0	0
College of the Sequoias	Foreman	5	0	0	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	0	4	5	0	0
	Employer	4	0	1	0	1	4	4	1	0	2	1	2	5	0	0
Coalinga College	Foreman	5	0	0	2	1	2	4	1	0	0	2	3	5	0	0
	Employer	5	0	0	1	1	3	3	2	0	0	3	2	5	0	0
Santa Paula High School	Foreman	5	0	0	4	0	1	5	0	0	1	0	4	5	0	0
	Employer	5	0	0	2	1	2	2	2	1	0	1	4	5	0	0
Coachella Valley Farm Center	Foreman	5	0	0	2	2	1	4	1	0	0	1	4	5	0	0
	Employer	3	0	2	0	1	4	1	1	3	1	1	3	3	2	0
Subtotal	Foreman	25	0	0	11	8	6	17	6	2	5	4	16	25	0	0
	Employer	21	1	3	3	5	17	12	7	6	3	7	15	23	2	0
Total		46	1	3	14	13	23	29	13	8	8	11	31	48	2	0

Analysis and Implications

From the answers made during 50 interviews, one could only conclude that the foremen, as a group, profited from the 20-hour course by increasing their skill in supervising farm workers. Supporting this position, a large majority of the employers said they could see improvement in their foreman's ability to handle workers as a result of the courses.

There was probably some reduction of worker turnover during the year as a result of personnel management skills the foremen learned in the courses; however, so many other factors affected personnel turnover that the influence of the courses was difficult to determine. Several specific instances were noted during the interviews where foremen were successful in preventing new workers from quitting their jobs by exercising techniques of good human relations which were learned or reinforced in the courses. For example, one new worker who became discouraged by the boredom of his job was given another type of job which he liked. As a result, he worked all summer and developed into a skilled employee.

The courses contributed considerably in increasing the work output of farm and ranch employees. Both foremen and their employers felt the courses helped foremen to better plan and lay out the work each day and to anticipate future problems. It was apparent that the instruction had a positive effect in broadening the thinking of the foremen and in making them more aware of the managerial and business decisions involved in making a profit.

It was fairly obvious from talking with the growers or employers, and also their foremen, that they had for years encouraged their employees to develop safe work habits. The excellent safety records of the 25 ranches, farms, and groves were evidence of this practice. Therefore, it is doubtful whether the Farm Supervisor Training Program contributed much in reducing worker accidents.

Both employers and their foremen said the Farm Worker Supervisor Training Program should be continued. They strongly felt these programs should be available to new foremen, and that the programs should be conducted within reasonable driving distance of their homes.

Summary

In the spring of 1966, individual interviews were conducted with 25 farm and ranch foremen and their employers who, the year previously, had completed a 20-hour course in Farm Labor Supervisor Training in five randomly selected

California schools. Geographically, the schools were located in the northern, west-central, east-central, and southern regions of the state. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the effectiveness of the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program in (1) reducing farm worker turnover, (2) increasing worker productivity, and (3) reducing accidents among farm workers.

Objective evidence was sought to answer the purposes of the study; however the opinions of the interviewees, because of the nature of the study, were in most cases the only evidence which could be obtained.

It is the belief of the investigator, after interviewing 50 employers and foremen, that the Farm Foreman Supervisor Training Program in California contributed appreciably in reducing farm and ranch worker turnover, and in increasing worker productivity. Although some evidence was found which seemed to show that the courses had made a contribution toward lowering worker accidents, this appeared to be a debatable outcome of the program.

Recommendations

Positive support was found in the evaluation for continuing and expanding the California Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program. The information obtained through the interviews provides a basis for making certain recommendations for future development of the program. These recommendations are listed by administrative, supervisory, and instructional areas of responsibility.

State Bureau of Agricultural Education, Sacramento

The years from 1964 to 1966 have been a period of experimentation for the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program. Courses were offered by a few interested teachers, often as an answer to pressure from interested local grower-labor associations, Department of Employment representatives, or California Farm Bureau officers. From all available evidence, the courses have considerable merit and should be made available in all areas of the state where large numbers of agricultural workers are employed. It is recommended that:

1. The State Bureau of Agricultural Education strongly encourage agricultural teachers in communities employing large numbers of agricultural workers to offer Farm Labor Supervisor Training courses each year.
2. Teachers, in organizing and planning courses, should follow the guidelines (to be prepared by James Becket, University of California, Davis) developed through experience in conducting the first two-year phase

of the program.

3. The annual summer conference of agriculture teachers devote a part of the program to discussing various aspects of the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program.
4. Continued financial support be provided to the Department of Agricultural Education, University of California, Davis, for coordinating, developing, and evaluating the program.

Department of Agricultural Education, University of California, Davis

This department has played the major role in developing the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program. The evaluation identified several areas where the department should give immediate attention in furthering and improving the program. It is recommended that the Department of Agricultural Education:

1. Develop guidelines for local school use in establishing a Farm Labor Supervisor Training course. These guidelines should help teachers in:
   a. determining the need for a course;
   b. securing school approval;
   c. establishing an advisory committee;
   d. deciding on the best time of the year to offer the course;
   e. establishing the number and length of classes;
   f. using local teaching resources;
   g. publicizing the course;
   h. recruiting students.
2. Prepare, publish, and make available to teachers resource materials to supplement and enrich each of the lessons of the Instructor's Guide published by the department. For example, several foremen interviewed reported their course could have been improved if mimeographed copies had been provided them of several "for instance" practical problems of workers that foremen often face. It was also suggested that limited "homework," consisting of assigned reading and similar activity on the part of the enrollees, could have made the course more effective.
3. Organize and conduct summer workshops for teachers who are or may become involved in the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Program.
4. Revise the Farm Labor Supervisor Training Instructor's Guide periodically, with the help of selected teacher committees experienced in the program.

5. Keep top level agricultural, educational, and employment organizations informed of developments in the program.
6. Offer assistance to teachers in organizing and planning courses.
7. Develop a teacher's guide for an advanced course in Farm Labor Supervisor Training. This follow-up course was recommended by a majority of the foremen interviewed. Perhaps such a course might enroll both foremen and their employers and include more information on such topics as:
   a. The economics of farm labor use.
   b. Ways to make the farm worker more efficient.
   c. Ways to equalize farm labor requirements throughout the year.
   d. How to keep good employees.

Teachers of Courses

Foremen interviewed in the survey offered several suggestions for improving future courses, as did some of the employers. (Later courses, using the revised Teacher's Guide, included material based on most of these suggestions). For this reason it is recommended that teachers of future courses:

1. Give considerable attention and emphasis to teaching the "human relations" phase of the course. (This unit should also be taught to all students enrolled in high school and junior college agricultural programs.)
2. Require each enrollee to give at least one demonstration, before his peers, of how to perform a farm skill. A thorough evaluation of his performance should be made immediately.
3. Require "homework" or assignments on a limited basis of all enrollees in future courses. Assignments should be geared to the education and competence levels of enrollees, thus requiring some variation of homework and individual study in any class.
4. Use experienced growers and foremen as resource speakers for specific topics.
5. Enroll foremen in separate courses from employees. Some classes might justify a mixed group, but this should not be the rule.
6. Make certain the teacher is communicating with all of his students. In some areas the teachers should be able to speak Spanish.
7. Keep all agricultural agencies in the community informed of plans for establishing a course. Their support should be encouraged in publicizing the course and in recruiting enrollees.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FOREMEN

_____ _____

Name Address

_____ _____

Location of Course Dates of Course

_____yes
_____dont't know
_____ no

1. Do you feel you are a better foreman as a result of having completed the course? Why?

Evidence: Check skills volunteered by foreman from below list showing areas of personal improvement.

_____Following the boss's instructions.
_____Training new workers.
_____Improving efficiency of old workers.
_____Giving clearer instructions to workers.
_____Improving morale among workers.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

2. Has worker turnover been reduced since you completed the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

3. (If #2 is yes.) Do you think a considerable part of this reduction was due to your increased skill in handling workers as a result of the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

4. Has worker productivity increased since you completed the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

5. (If #4 is yes.) Do you think a considerable amount of credit for this increase was due to your increased skill in handling workers learned through the course?

Evidence:

Other factors:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

6. Has there been any noticeable reduction of accidents of workers supervised by you since completing the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

7. (If #6 is yes.) Do you think a considerable part of this reduction was due to knowledge gained by you in the course?

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

8. Do you feel this type of course should be available to all new foremen in the future?

General recommendations re future courses:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EMPLOYERS

Name _____ Address _____

Location of Course _____ Dates of Course _____

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

1. Do you feel there has been any improvement in your foreman's ability as a supervisor of workers as a result of this course?

Evidence: Check skill volunteered by employer from below list showing area of his improvement.

_____Following my instructions.
_____Training new workers.
_____Improving efficiency of old workers.
_____Giving clearer instructions to workers.
_____Improving morale among workers.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

2. Has there been any noticeable reduction of turnover of workers he supervises since he completed the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

3. (If #2 is yes.) Do you think a considerable part of this reduction was due to his learning more skills in handling workers in the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

4. Has workers productivity increased under this man since he completed the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

5. (If #4 is yes.) Do you feel a considerable amount of the credit for this increase was due to his increased skill in handling workers learned through the course?

Evidence:

Other Factors:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

6. Has there been any noticeable reduction of accidents of workers supervised by this man since he completed the course?

Evidence:

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

7. (If #6 is yes.) Do you feel a considerable part of this reduction was due to knowledge gained by the foreman in the course?

_____yes
_____don't know
_____no

8. Do you feel this type of course should be available for all new foremen in the future?

General recommendations re future courses: